

CHASTISEMENTS NEGLECTED FORERUNNERS OF
GREATER.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT MARGARET CHAPEL,

ON THE VIGIL OF THE ANNUNCIATION,

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED "FOR A

GENERAL FAST AND HUMILIATION

Before Almighty God,

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN PARDON OF OUR SINS;"

AND "FOR THE REMOVAL OF THOSE HEAVY JUDGMENTS WHICH OUR
MANIFOLD SINS AND PROVOCATIONS HAVE MOST
JUSTLY DESERVED."

BY THE

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OXFORD.

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ANY PROFIT TO BE GIVEN TO FEED POOR IRISH CHILDREN.

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A

S E R M O N,

&c.

JOEL ii. 12, 13.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil.

WELL has this Epistle been chosen for this day, brethren; for surely it seems like an Epistle written to us by Almighty God Himself, traced not with pen and ink or on tables of stone, but written in our hearts by His own Finger, and the lines are of suffering and death. The Prophet Joel is an awful yet tender preacher; prophesying of judgments to come, and teaching how by the mercy of God all judgments may be turned aside, from that under which the people of God were then suffering, until

the Judgment of the Great Day. He speaks of no special sin, for which the sufferings were sent, and so warns against all sin: he speaks of the power of repentance with God, without any limit, and so proclaims a Gospel message of universal forgiveness and release. And this message he bore to a nation whose present sufferings and future fears were like our own. A heavy judgment of God was upon the land, there were fears of worse; and that worse the Prophet had to denounce, unless men repented. A grievous famine was already come; there was a wide desolation; nature itself mourned to its God. The very beasts bare the sin¹ of man, and groaned, as it were, to God, Who compassionates all suffering, to Whom all suffering is a mute cry; Who hears the ravens' cry, and of Whom, Scripture says, "the lions ask their meat." The Prophet calls his people not to be duller than the very beasts, but to join, as one man, in one earnest cry to the mercy of God. He calls all, the very young and the very old, priests and people. Those who had yet pure joy were to lay it aside; "let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride from her bridal closet:" the very children at the breasts were to go forth in the common sorrow; both to awaken more deeply their parents' sorrow; and surely no sorrow so calls forth the tender mercy of God, as that of little ones whom His Gracious Hands have just made, and who have not

¹ נאשמו, Joel i. 18.

marred His work in themselves. As in Nineveh, among those who pleaded to Him, were the "six-score thousand persons who could not discern between their right hand and their left²." Where thanksgivings were made at other times, with gladness of heart, "between the porch and the altar," now there must be sorrow; the priests were there to weep and intercede for the people. None were to spare themselves in the common sorrow: the very old, whose strength seemed gone, or the very young, who as yet had it not; those who suffered for their misery, and those who suffered not, by fellow-suffering, were to form one common band, who by united sorrow should prevail with God.

Else what was far worse, was coming. "The Day of the Lord was nigh at hand, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness," darkness "which could be felt," coming suddenly, universally, and, if it came, hopelessly; reaching every corner of the land, "like the morning spread upon the mountains," pervading all, penetrating all, enveloping all, like the light; only instead of light it would be darkness. And if the light were turned into darkness, how great that darkness! If the very morning brought sorrow, what other dawn was there? "The Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" The evil to come is told in words which comprise much in one. Every

² Jonah iv. 11.

judgment looks on to the end. Each, unless men repent, is a harbinger of another. When Israel grievously sinned under Ahab, God said by Elijah “Him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.” More searching was the scourge which God raised up within them, than the heathen scourge without; more awful the Prophet, by whom God says, “I hewed them; I have slain them by the words of My mouth³,” than the avenger by whom God destroyed all the worshippers of Baal. For the prophet spake of the second death. And now again, the palmer-worm⁴, and the locust, and the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, had been as four armies of God, each, in succession, destroying what the former had left. Drought had there been too, and nature seemed ashamed⁵; disappointing men, and lying, as it were, under the displeasure of Almighty God. Yet as the plagues of Egypt deepened in sorrow, until the Egyptians said, “We be all dead men,” so here more awful scourges were hanging over them; whether a plague like the former, only more terrible, or destroyers numerous as the locusts, yet fiercer, even man; or, as it seems, both successively⁶; as in the book of the Revelation, they are assuredly no mere locusts, whose king is the angel of the bottomless pit, Apollyon, the Destroyer⁷. And again, when foreshowing and forewarning His people of the bless-

³ Hos. vi. 5.

⁴ Joel i. 4.

⁵ Joel i. 12.

⁶ So S. Cyrill Al., Theodoret, S. Jerome.

⁷ Rev. ix. 11.

ing and the curse, upon obedience or rebellion, how, if they would walk in His statutes He would walk among them, and be their God and they His people, He adds again and again⁷ the heavy sentence, if they turn not at His first chastisement, "And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins;" "I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins." And so in that last book of prophecy which foretells the woes wherewith the Church shall be purified, and the world shall be punished, until the end, when four angels had sounded, yet another "cried with a loud voice through the midst of the heavens, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels which are yet to sound⁸." And when our Lord had foretold "wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, in divers places," He adds, "All these are the beginning of sorrows⁹;" the beginning of those birth-pangs¹ which shall issue in the creation of "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

So, then, there is one law in the New Testament and the Old, in God's kingdom of nature and of grace, with Churches, and nations, and individuals,—that judgments come on slowly, in the long-suffering

⁷ Lev. xxvi. 18, 21, 24, 28. ⁸ Rev. viii. 13. ⁹ Matt. xxi. 8.

¹ ὠδίνων.

of God, yet successively; and these, if men repent not, more and more deeply, until they end in the destruction of the sin or of the sinner. "He shall find an end of escaping, when he hath not found an end of sinning²." And there is this difference between the prophecies of the New Testament and the Old: those of the Old are addressed to the persons under trial, and appeal to them: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel³?" "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye⁴." In the New Testament, prophecy surveys beforehand the sins of man, contains no call to repentance, but is the denunciation of the wrath of God, as it shall be successively, hopelessly, finally, poured out upon the impenitent.

And so, although living under grace, we turn back for comfort to the Old Testament, the history of God's Providences, there to read God's dealings with us when under His chastisements. It is the light of all other history, Christian or profane. It lifts the veil; and in it we see events, not following one another only, but marshalled by the Hand of God; not locusts only or hail devouring and destroying the fruit of the ground; or the sword, or famine, or

² Tert. de Pœnit. c. vii. p. 361, Oxf. Tr. ³ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

⁴ Ezek. xix. 32.

the pestilence ; but God bringing the locusts with His wind, casting forth the ice like morsels, or saying to the sword, “ Sword, go through the land ;” not tens of thousands only perishing by the pestilence when David’s heart was lifted up, and he numbered the people, or the hundred and fourscore and five thousand of Sennacherib’s found dead in one night, just as he was “ shaking his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion ⁵ ;” but the angel of the Lord with his sword drawn over Jerusalem, and smiting the camp of the Assyrian. And not this again only, but we see God, at the word of His Prophet, shutting the heavens, that it rain not during the space of three years and six months ; and again, at the Prophet’s prayer, “ the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit ⁶ ;” and how, at Moses’ prayer, “ the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the ground,” and “ the Lord sent a strong west wind which took away the locusts ; there remained not one locust in all the land of Egypt ;” and Israel prevailed over Amalek ; and when David offered sacrifice on Mount Moriah, the image of that Spotless Sacrifice, as at this time then offered, and in union with It, “ The Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel ⁷ ;” and how Hezekiah’s prayer obtained deliverance from Sennacherib, when pressing against the gates of Jerusalem. And now the Prophet points to the armies ⁸

⁵ Is. x. 32. ⁶ 1 Kings xvii. 1 ; xviii. 42. S. James v. 17, 18.

⁷ 2 Sam., end.

⁸ Joel ii. 2—11.

of the wrath of God, marshalled, swift, wide-spread, resistless, invulnerable, speeding on in one unbroken, unentangled course, to execute His sentence ; nothing can escape, 'nothing turn aside, nothing be fenced against them ; they come (as an image of the Day of Judgment) suddenly, by surprise, "like a thief"⁹ ;" heaven and earth quaked before its terrors ; all faces gathered blackness. Yet even thus, in this last moment, the people are called to penitence ; and then all evil should at once be swept away, all that was lost restored¹.

And so, in Christian times, have heathen armies², on prayer, been defeated by lightning and hail, sent from heaven against them, or driven back from the walls of a helpless city³, or earthquakes stopped at the cry of a whole people, "Lord, have mercy"⁴ ;" or pestilence been arrested⁵ ; as when this very city was desolated by the plague, its ravages abated from the day of united earnest prayer. And what other was it than the Hand of "the Most High ruling in the kingdoms of men," when in our own days half a

⁹ Is. ii. 9., comp. Matt. xxii. 23. 1 Thess. v. 2, 4. 2 Pet. iii. 10.

¹ Ver. 18—27.

² At the prayers of the Christian soldiers in the army of Marcus Antoninus. See also Tillemont, *Hist. d. Emp. t. v. art. 80*, p. 165, on the miraculous victory of Theodosius over Eugenius.

³ As Attila from Orleans. Other deliverances are mentioned by Tillemont, *Hist. d. Emp. vi. p. 67*.

⁴ Constantinople under Theodosius.

⁵ As in the time of Gregory the Great. Vit. Joh. Diac. i. 43. Greg. Turon. x. 1.

million of soldiery, gathered by the scourge of Europe, rolled like a tide to destroy, and to establish an anti-Christian rule, and scarce a fragment returned? More were those slain by famine and winter, than those who were slain by the sword. Fire, frost, and cold fought against the enemy of God ⁶.

God fought for us then, Brethren ! He exempted us from the scourge which wasted all Europe besides. He spoke to us in great mercy. Even when He would teach us to repent, He taught us rather by the sufferings of others than our own. We used to speak thankfully, how our land was spared the horrors of war. We suffered indeed by it, because we had at home the sorrows of the widow and the fatherless ; but its most dreadful horrors reached us not. For nearly eight hundred years, no war has reached this land but what our own passions kindled among ourselves. In a neighbouring land a form of Anti-Christ arose, and God taught us in the carnage there, what our own ways would lead to. He said to us in them, " Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." He speaks to us the same words now ; but the visitation of His displeasure is not near us only ; it is upon us. By His grace, though slowly and partially, we may hope that we have, in the last fifty years, been turning to Him. And thence we may hope, too, that this heavy judgment is an austere mercy. Every judgment of God, until men, by final impenitence,

⁶ The fires of Moscow, and the cold, 27 or 28 degrees below zero.

exhaust it to themselves, and prove themselves unworthy of it, and incapable of amendment, is mercy. As individuals, we feel it is so. Woe is us, that we need so deep a wound; yet the deeper our sores, the more loving and merciful our Physician, Who passed us not by, loathsome as we were in His Holy Eyes, nor ceased to wound us until He reached the very depth of the sore which consumed our life. And what we know by experience as individuals, we believe as a Church and nation, that His Wounds are but to heal; unless through our own wilfulness we put away His healing Hand, and make them incurable.

Yet awful is the Touch of God, even in mercy. Jacob's sinew shrank, strong as he was in faith, and touched in love, that he might know His might with Whom by weeping he prevailed; and he halted all his days. What when it is in displeased love, or loving displeasure! What when the Holy One must hate that which hangs about us, yea, it may be, is wound very close around ourselves, that He must burn it to the very core, that He may save ourselves. For sin admitted is very near ourselves, is almost part of us, it encompasses us. "The world," saith the Apostle, "*lieth* in wickedness." "They become," saith the Prophet⁷, "abominations like that they love." Sin winds around the soul, changes a man's heart into a beast's heart, fills his thoughts, defiles his imagi-

⁷ Hosea ix. 10.

nation. "The iron" may well "enter into the soul," which is to save it from such an inmate as this! The sinner must feel very near the displeasure of God, Who is "a consuming Fire;" Who, "by a spirit of burning," consumes the sinner, that He may save the man. Gold and dross are so mixed up in us, that we seem to ourselves all dross: sin seems so to have penetrated the sinner's very substance, thoughts, words, acts, the motions of his will, the feelings which come most readily to him, which seem so to come from within, as to be his very inmost self, that he can scarcely in thought sever the self which longs to be freed from sin, from the self which is so steeped in sin; the soul which, by God's pardoning grace and the Blood of Christ, shall be cleansed from all sin, from the soul now so sin-stained.

And so God's judgments have ever a twofold aspect, of terror and of love; the cloud and the bow in it. Yet the darkness is oftentimes so heavy, that the portion of the bow which we see, though very bright, is very small. The thunder and lightning and rain are upon us; the hope is for the time to come.

And this is most when God's warnings have been neglected. In these later years we have had them manifoldly. Internal troubles threatened us; one large city was in flames. God ruled, and still keeps down elements of destruction, which, if united and kindled, might make our whole land one moral waste. Fearful disease threatened us from afar. When it came very near us, God mitigated its

extent, awful as it was where it seized, grasping the whole frame, without rest or reprieve or breathing-space, until it collapsed in death. Yet He soon in mercy withdrew it. We breathed again; and some thanked Him. Year after year, again and again during the last ten years, it has been noticed how, just at the moment when all seemed lost, God gave us the very skies we needed; the rain ceased or came at His bidding and our prayers. At one while, the seed-time was all but gone; and then at the last moment came all those changes of weather, which the husbandman knows to be most needed. Again, the skies were as brass; we prayed; and when prayer became general, on that day He sent rain on His inheritance. Again, harvests were all but lost through exceeding rain; “the summer⁸ was ended, but we were not saved.” What was all this, but the Arm of God lifted up, yet sparing us, when just about to fall? And what did we? As the Israelites of old. “They sang praise unto Him⁹; but within a while they forgot His works, and would not abide His counsels.” The very plagues of Egypt seemed to come on our coasts; He slew our fish¹; He sent a murrain upon our cattle; they died by a new and strange disease we knew not of, nor how

⁸ Jer. viii. 20.

⁹ Ps. cvi. 12, 13.

¹ “How wondrous have been the dealings of the Lord these three years past! In 1845, our cattle suddenly died in numbers, and our coasts were strewed with fish, blackened and dead,” &c. (Extract of a letter from Ireland.)

to cure. And then, in the last year, in one night, the whole crop upon which our brethren in Ireland depended for life, well-nigh perished. We read the like histories in the Prophets: we read of the four sore judgments of God; the sword, the famine, the noisome beast, and the pestilence: yet the fore-runners of some of those judgments have been among us, and we heeded it not. We heeded not the "voices of the Prophets read among us" every Lord's Day; we would not interpret what we saw and felt by God's own Word: people spoke of a "murrain," but the very name reminded them not Who sent it. Even in the last year, people were employed in seeking out all natural causes of the disease: well and right had this been, had we also humbled ourselves and owned from Whose Hand it came; and when at last, human wisdom was baffled, and knew not whence it was, had, at least, with the magicians of Egypt, owned, "This is the finger of God." We believed not that God was, in earnest, smiting us; and so we lost the time wherein to turn away His displeasure; and famine from Him burst in upon us in all its horrors, the more dreadfully because unprepared. A famine, such as, for centuries past, has been known by history alone! It is likened only to famines half-way back to the Birth of our Lord, the middle ages. And now, unless God's mercy turn it aside, "these are but the beginnings of sorrows." Spring is opening upon us, but brings no gladness to their desolation; Easter-

tide to the sufferers is one Lent of famine; the bright glad days of summer, it is feared, may but draw forth a pestilence from the hardly-buried corpses; death is thronging upon death; one form of death is born of another; new diseases, in a few hours, finish what famine has begun; we hear of new names of diseases²: famine-fever—fever, that is, generated by the continual wastings of gnawing and corroding hunger; forms unnaturally emaciated, or unnaturally swollen by disease; walking “spectres;” death seated in the eyes, and bespeaking itself therein, while the sufferer still moves, perhaps unconscious of it; living and dead, side by side, decaying together, where there is none to bury the dead, and, too often, no human help can aid the living; no food to support, scarce water often, to slake the fever of famine. And they who relate these things, tell us there are other things too horrible to relate. Deaths are now uncounted, counted here and there by fifties or by hundreds³; but the dead often buried

² “Famine, typhus fever, dysentery, and a disease hitherto unknown, are sweeping away the whole population.” Narrative of a journey from Oxford to Skibbereen, by Lord Dufferin and the Hon. G. F. Boyle. A still more appalling detail is given in “A Journal of a Visit of three days to Skibbereen and its neighbourhood, by Elihu Burritt,” a benevolent American. It has already been stated in “the Guardian,” that Glengarriffe suffers as much as Skibbereen. A Clergyman from Ireland mentioned that he knew five places suffering as much as Skibbereen.

³ Mr. Burritt closes his narrative after a most appalling statement: “He (Dr. D.) related other cases too horrible to be

unheeded, uncoffined, unwept, amid the extremity of misery, by those who loved them most. "There are no widows to make lamentation." The husband carries his wife's uncoffined remains, the brother his sister, the mother her child, without a tear, to the grave; the inward misery and cry to God, the only prayer over their remains! The prophet's words seem fulfilled, "Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him;" or again, "I praised the dead that are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive ⁴."

There are outstanding cases of horror and of grief; but again and again is all this bodily suffering and anguish of soul repeated amid more than three millions of people; again and again it is said, "if things go on thus, within three months a fourth of the people will perish ⁵." The length of half an

published," and such, is the uniform tenor of private letters: they omit details, as "too harrowing to relate."

⁴ Eccles. iv. 2.

⁵ "There were at that moment 500 persons dying of want every week in the barony (Duhallow, co. Cork).—Statement of a Grand Juryman: see *Guardian*, March 27. In the Union Work-house at Bantry (population 3500) there have, in the last seven weeks, been 400 deaths (more than 1-9th); but this is only a small portion of the mortality. Three coffins are kept in constant requisition about the streets, by the Relief Committee, to convey to the grave those who would otherwise remain uninterred, or receive only a burial revolting to humanity. The visitation under which we are suffering is only now beginning to exhibit itself in its full misery."—Private Letter.

island, from sea to sea, is become like a besieged city; or that devoted place, once the city of God, upon whom the wrath of God fell, when it had crucified its Lord. They who witness it say, "it exceeds all, save the siege of Jerusalem." Horrors there are, which one could scarce name except in the solemnity of Scripture language. The curse on the house of Ahab, fulfilled on members of Christ, "Him that dieth of Ahab in the city shall the dogs eat." More horrible yet is the temptation to sin; for what must be the misery where, for a morsel of food, one man could be found to murder two children! Well-nigh all the sorrows of the Lamentations over the city, "once full of people, that sitteth solitary," are there: "the tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst;" the young children, hundreds upon hundreds in one city⁶, "ask for bread, and no man breaketh it unto them."

⁶ Galway. See extracts in Guardian, March 23. "One such proof of our wretchedness by which I have been forcibly struck on every visit to Bantry (co. Cork), is the sensible diminution in the population. The children, I may say, have been almost all swept off, or are confined to their wretched hovels with fever and dysentery. Scarce any are to be seen about the streets."—Extract of a letter from the Clergyman of Glengarriffe. "We supplied with breakfast last week 3133 children (*i. e.* 449 daily, those on the list being 700): the far greater number never taste a morsel in the day but what we can procure for them. If you but heard and saw the dear little sufferers calling upon JESUS, the Father of the poor, to bless their benefactors!"—Extract of another Letter from the Presentation Convent, Galway. Like accounts

"The countenances of a whole population are changed by famine;" "they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered; it is become like a stick;" "they have given their" all "for bread to bring back the soul;" "their children and their sucklings swoon in the streets of the city; their soul is poured out in their mothers' bosom," and they lie as corpses there.

Such is some portion of the present visitation, multiplied, again and again, in dark cabins, where misery shrouds itself from sight, tombs of the living and the dead. Such, unless God turn scarcity into plenty, is the prospect of five dreary months. And what beyond? God, in His mercy, knoweth! Yet His present gifts of a hopeful season are oftentimes of no avail, since there is neither strength nor hope to till the ground; and a seed-time, neglected in despair, threatens another year of yet sorer famine to come. Pestilence has begun; who, save One, can stay it? Who, save One, shall bid it stay, that it reach not ourselves? All nature seems to shake. The awful disease which God mitigated to us some years past, has been again, as before, wasting the East, and is said to be on its march Westward.

are given at *Tuam* (Private Letter). In *Doneraile* alone, the Dispensary Physician declared on oath at an inquest, "Two thousand are in want of food and clothing. The people are dying fast from starvation and disease."—Private Letter from the Clergyman of *Doneraile* and *Templeroan*. The population of both is more than 10,000.

Scarcity, although not such as ours, is in different parts of Europe also. The long peace, which God has given us, is, again and again, shaken by rumours of war. God still gives peace; but our own inventions, our pride and boast, lay us open to the desolation of war hereafter, if God permit, as we have not been for centuries. What elements of ruin have we not in our heathenized population at home! Who shall save us, except our God? And how shall He be won to look favourably upon us but by repentance and prayer?

Every visitation of God speaks its own message to the soul. "Thy sin," He says, "shall find thee out." And sorrow and suffering bring to remembrance the sin to which prosperity tempted, or which it forgot. Whatever good deeds⁷ we have, of these late years, by the grace of God, done, more than heretofore, He Who gave us to do them, will remember the more, the more we forget them; as our evil deeds He will forget if we remember them. To-day is set apart to humble ourselves for our manifold sins and provocations; "the iniquities of this land for which He is pleased to visit us⁸." I will name but four which this visitation seems especially intended to correct: "covetousness, which is ido-

⁷ Increased thoughts for the temporal and spiritual wants of the poor, their education, the building of Churches, extension of the Gospel in our colonies: in all, there has been, in this last half century, a most blessed growth, which God only could have given, and a witness that His Holy Spirit is with us.

⁸ Title of Form of Prayer for the day.

latry;" pride, the very sin by which Satan fell; and its very opposite, the sin of fallen man, luxury,—“whose god is their belly;" hard-heartedness and neglect of those who minister to our wants.

We cannot, if we will, deny it. Some are the evil brood of the other. Whatever amendments there may have been in us, luxury and self-indulgence have been increasing among us: no class has been contented with the expenditure of their forefathers; new luxuries have invaded us; luxuries have become comforts, and comforts necessities and our idols. And luxury is the parent of covetousness; and covetousness of unjust gain, and of the grinding of the poor. We *will* not limit our self-indulgence; and so, to obtain it cheaply, we pare down the wages of our artizans. They who have seen it, know how full often the very clothes we wear are, while they are made, moistened by the tears of the poor. How has the same desire of cheapness, to vie with others, impaired the character of our trade, and made practices common which our forefathers would have counted dishonesty! The very world, not thoughtful Christians only, has termed part of our eagerness for gain a “mania,” or madness. Which exhibits the picture of a Christian, the heathen sovereign who burnt the soul-destroying drug with which we were lawlessly tempting his people, and year by year more infecting them⁹, or ourselves who warred to protect a deadly

⁹ See the fearful account of the increase of the illicit trade in opium, and some of its destructive effects, in Martin's pamphlet.

but gainful traffic? How again does this eagerness for gainful trade congregate masses often impenetrable to the Gospel, open to Satan alone! How does it wear out the soul, until it lives but to refresh the body! What is almost every place whence our wealth, our strength, our comforts are gathered, our ports, our mines, our manufactories, but nurseries of vice, and, as far as in us lies, pitfalls into hell! After all the toils of its present Bishop, (alas! so ill responded to by many of its wealthiest,) what is this great town but a mere wilderness for souls to starve and perish? And what, amid all this neglect, if we seek not to amend it, is our very religious worship, but formality and hypocrisy? For, were it indeed a blessing to men's souls, could they be so careless of the souls of others? Could the rich be content to worship God in these solitudes, so rarely, throughout this city of full two millions of souls, gladdened by the presence of those, whose birthright is the kingdom of heaven, whom this world's poverty should, in God's purpose, enrich to life eternal?

And now God would break in pieces these our idols. He has smitten our crops and our herds with disease; and the knowledge wherein we prided ourselves can discover neither cause nor remedy, that we may at last know that riches and wisdom come of Him. He has for the time laid low our idol of national prosperity; we are even perplexed how to do aught for the honour of our God; "the meat-

offering and drink-offering is cut off from the house of the Lord;" for we know not what to do in the presence of such a scourge from God, such accumulated misery. More blessedly would He teach us to unlearn our luxuries, and learn self-denial; for were it not to insult the Majesty of God to indulge in luxuries, while His people, whom He has redeemed, are perishing?

"If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." And are we then indeed members of Christ, if we could give ourselves to feasting, and entertaining one another, while that deep cry of half a nation's misery is ringing in our ears? It is hard to take even Lenten food now, when tens of thousands on tens of thousands are crying for it, for the love of *our* God. The very beasts of the field cower, and are still, beneath the thunder-cloud. The very seabirds wail, when one of their fellows is struck dead. Are we, I say not Christians, but men, if we can "eat, drink, and be merry," while half a people, our own flesh and bones, are, in intensest suffering, tottering to the grave? Picture to yourselves any fragment of the misery which there takes place, day by day, and hour by hour. Imagine to yourselves your fellow-Christians perishing, like the beasts, on the highways or in ditches; walling themselves in their poor hovels, that they may, at least, waste away, hour by hour, unknown; or death-stricken while they seem to live; a population sensibly diminishing, and the very children disappearing from

the streets through disease or death; imagine this, which over half Ireland, from north to south, is multiplied again and again; imagine, if you can, any of the deep moral misery of husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, (it is beyond all imagining,) imagine it, not as if a little way removed, but here in this very city, and bethink you what were fitting in such a visitation as this. What says the prophet, of suffering far less wide than this? “In that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness and to girding with sackcloth; and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts.” If we are deaf to the cry of such misery, will it not ascend into the ears of our Father in Heaven, as a witness against us?

We dare not surely, Brethren, as has been done heretofore, enlist vanities in the ministration to such misery; we dare not mock God, or the sorrows of the perishing, by offering relief gained by frivolities or amusements. Such things, at all times, eat out the very bowels of true charity. But in the sight of death, striking down its thousands, sparing neither young nor old, sweeping away the strong and healthy, and in some forms reaching to such as ourselves¹,

¹ “Fever is spreading to every class; and even the rich are

whom God has hitherto exempted from sufferings, they are more hideous than bodily death. It were like dancing on the graves of the dead. To speak plainly, such things as are heard of, acting plays, visiting theatres, making a purchase of vanities, balls, for the relief of Irish famine, to soothe the intense misery of human beings, now in form often scarce human, wasting and parched away and dried up with famine, and fever, and pestilence, and, at times, bereft of reason itself², through suffering, what were it but a mockery of God and man? Are they not our own bones and our flesh? Could people so do, if they saw one fraction of the misery they would thus minister to? Would not one form of Irish death, like the handwriting on the wall in the midst of Belshazzar's luxury, change such scenes into mourning, at least in horror for themselves? Could persons go forth from luxury and ease to visit Christ's sick, and feed His hungry, and clothe His naked, and gain His reward, Who at this time Himself was faint and bruised, and His visage marred more than man, and stripped upon the Cross for our salvation, and Who left His members to us to receive in them our love for Him Who loved us? Does He, the Maker of heaven and earth, Who upholds in being Angels by Himself, and the dwellers on this earth by His gifts, Who rained manna on His people to

becoming involved in the same destruction."—Lord Dufferin's and Mr. Boyle's Narrative.

² Madness itself has been the consequent of this suffering.

eat, and fed five thousand with five barley loaves and two small fishes, does He need our gold and silver to feed His dying? Does He, the Giver of all, need His creatures, our perishable gold and silver? or doth He crave the offerings of our hearts, the pure gold of charity, cleansed from earthliness seven times by the fire of His love? Could He not, at a word, without a miracle, (except as far as all His Acts of Providence or of grace are full of miracles, for “marvellous are His works,”) could He not unbind the rivers of America and Russia, and send food for His people? Did He, the Rich Householder, the Father of Mercies, Who sufficeth all, and faileth not, leave His poor in the land, because His own bounty was too small, or His means stinted? Did He not rather promise, even under the Old Testament, as a blessing, that “the poor should never cease out of the land,” that we might in them obtain blessings from Him, and both glorify God,—we, by a loving mercy, and they, by a loving thankfulness? What saith Scripture? “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to deal *thy* bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” “To deal,” *i.e.* to divide, “*thy* bread,” thine own bread, what thou thyself wouldest eat. That, God says, is the fast which He has chosen, which goes forth in charity; and that is charity in His sight, which has its root in self-denial. It is right, if we

can, to suffer with the suffering, to know what hunger is, when we would feed the starving, to give liberally thine own bread. But, at least, God would teach us to end these dreadful contrasts (which shock the eyes of men like ourselves) of extreme luxury, scarcely parted by a street, at times scarcely by the thickness of a house, from extreme squalidness. He would now speak to our hearts, that hearing Him now in this time of awe, the love He gives us now, may live in us, consume in us the lust of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, and draw down on us fresh influxes of His love. For what saith God? "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward." As, before, morning was turned into the shadow of death, so shall self-denying bountifulness, He says, turn darkness into light; the Light of Him Who is Light shall dawn upon our hearts, and be shed on all around us, and burst forth in glad hues, the tokens of His love; He shall heal the sicknesses of thy soul, and thy health shall shoot forth and grow in rich exuberance of His bounty; and "thy righteousness shall go before thee;" righteousness, by Him given, shall marshal thy way through the wilderness of this world before thee, smooth the hindrances which let thee, level the rough places which make thee stumble, straighten the crooked ways, and lead thee onward on the highway to thy God. Yea, self-denying love shall pre-

sent herself before thee at the gates of heaven, and they, from which she issued unto thee, shall open before her ; for she is the offspring of God, (since God is love,) she came forth from the wounded Side of Jesus, she is in us the Gift of His Spirit, “the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through His Spirit which He hath given us;” and “the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward,” protecting thee from Satan, and “gathering³ thee up” safely into the abode of love, and enfolding thee there in the glory and joy and love of thy Lord. For so He says, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat.”

I said, “self-denying love;” for of such Holy Scripture speaks, and such is the love of our Lord. Love which is of God must burn up in us the love of self, and of perishing things ; it must consume the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life ; for love and lust cannot dwell together ; but, instead of ashes, God through it will give us bread ; for short-lived fevers of indulgence, rest and peace in Him ; for this world’s pageant, the beauty of the soul through grace ; for vanities, Himself, the light and joy, and sweetness, and bliss, and hope, and rich possession of the soul.

As then, in this day of humiliation, we are bound

³ The word means to “gather up,” either of an individual, or (as the metaphor here may be) of the rear of an army ; whence our Version.

to humble ourselves for our own sins and for the sins of our people,—for they are our own separate sins which have by their blended corruption and offensiveness drawn down this chastisement from Almighty God,—so let us consider well in what way we may amend them. Let us, if we have not before, review our own lives in sorrow before Him, learn what in them is amiss, how we may amend them, what new way of obedience we may strike into, what besetting sin extinguish, what self-indulgences we may part with, that we may gain God. If we have done this, and received, we hope, the pardon of God, let us mourn again that we ever offended His love, Who gave His Son to die to win our love, and pray Him to blot out in us all the traces of our sin, and give us back the graces we might have had, had we not so sinned. Thus God says, “I will restore to you the years which the cankerworm hath eaten;” He will restore the decay of the soul, wasted and consumed by sin, and give us back the graces of which Satan robbed us, and Himself, the Fountain of grace, enter into our souls, and gladden and beautify them by His Presence. He “will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him, even a meat-offering and a drink-offering,” a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord our God.

Only let us turn with all our hearts, not keeping back part of the price, our own selves, which He has purchased for Himself; “Rend we our hearts,” and so pour out and empty before Him all which we fos-

tered there, (He will not loathe it, though loathsome,) that so in pure hearts we may receive His pure and Holy Spirit. And “turn we unto the Lord our God;” turn we wholly, so as not to look aside or look back at that which we have left, but set our faces straight towards Him, looking to catch the light of His grace, looking wholly unto Him to know His will for us, looking to Him with all the earnestness we can for pardon, and light, and strength, and victory over ourselves, and, as He Himself says, “Return unto Me,” not “towards Me” only, but reaching on through perseverance, which is His gift, until, when death is the passage unto life, we by His mercy reach Himself. “Great,” says a writer ⁴, who knew prophecy only, not the Gospel, “great is penitence which reacheth *quite up* to (it is God’s own word ⁵) the Throne of Glory.” “So shall ye eat in plenty and be satisfied,” even with the Bread of Angels, Himself our Food, “and praise the Name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously for you; and My people shall never be ashamed,” shall not be ashamed for ever.

If then there be any love of God or man, any desire to love Him who died for us, and those whom in His own stead He gives us to love, any longing to love Him for ever, cherish it in silence and stillness now. What might be allowable at other times,

⁴ Kimchi on Hos. xiv. 1, quoted by Pococke.

⁵ עָרִי.

would be ghastly now. Cut off what thou needest not, take with the more thankfulness what thou needest, which He in His deep mercy and judgment giveth to thee, and withholdeth it from so many, who, we must own, deserve it far more than we. Be this day of solemn humiliation such to our own souls. Each sinner adds to fill up the measure of a nation's sins; each penitent draws down the loving kindness of God, that "He spare His people, and give not His heritage to reproach." For some deep purpose must so grievous a visitation have been sent by the God of mercy. But His visitations are seasons of grace also. Miss we not it for our own souls! So through the Precious Blood-shedding of our All-loving Lord, shall joy spring out of sorrow, abundance out of want, comfort out of desolation, hope out of hopelessness, rest out of trouble, life out of death, from brief afflictions an eternal weight of glory.

An earnest thereof will be to-day's humiliation and to-morrow's mercy. To-day it seemed best that we should study penitence only; and so the solace of penitence, the Offering to our God, the Holy Eucharist, hath been withholden. To-morrow is that pledge of His Infinite love, wherewith He, the Maker of all, vouchsafed by His Power and Spirit to overshadow His creature, and, when He "would deliver man, abhorred not the Virgin's Womb." Twice, then, both in the early morning and in the later service, will the pledges of His love be offered.

May God so cleanse our souls by penitence to-day, that on the morrow He may find in us a mansion prepared for Himself, and enter in there, sealing our pardon by the Holy Kiss⁶ of His forgiveness, and saying to our inmost souls: Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged! May He so dwell in our hearts by love, that they may never again wax cold, but dwell in Him and His love for ever, where, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth ever one God, world without end. Amen.

⁶ Cant. i. 2, is interpreted by Fathers of the Holy Eucharist. See on S. Cyprian.

THE END.



